

Alberta North in the '80s



Conference to Help Plan for the Future



The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) will be sponsoring a major conference, "Alberta North in the '80s", in Grande Prairie on November 20, 21 and 22, 1980. The Conference will give residents of northern Alberta an opportunity to discuss ideas and concerns with provincial cabinet ministers, senior government officials and private sector representatives. A major objective will be to provide a setting in which citizens can present their views to government and private sector decision-makers on issues which loom as

significant in the decade ahead.

Northerners attending the conference will come from many different walks of life and from all parts of the area.

The agenda for the Conference is designed to meet a broad range of interests. An audio-visual presentation on northern Alberta and introductory comments by Elmer Borstad, Chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council, will open the Conference. Hon. J.A. "Boomer" Adair will introduce Premier Peter Lougheed as

keynote speaker. A showing of the newly-released film "People of the Oil Sands" will conclude the first evening.

On the second day, Harold Millican, Administrator of the Northern Pipeline Agency, will speak on implications of development for the north. This will be followed by a series of panels, question periods and small group discussions with three principal themes: business and employment opportunities, implications for people, and infrastructure and servicing requirements. After a speech by the Hon. Ralph Steinhauer, an evening panel

will be held on native participation in development.

The morning of the third day will be devoted to a "report back" session on the small group discussions and a series of open question periods with various provincial cabinet ministers. At the close of the Conference, provincial cabinet ministers, senior government officials and private sector representatives will have a better understanding of Alberta north in the '80s.

NADC will weigh conference deliberations and publish a summary report.

Premier To Attend Conference

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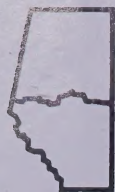
in the decade ahead and follow up on his remarks made previously at the NADC sponsored "Opportunity North Conference" held in Peace River November 26-29, 1975. At that time, the Premier emphasized the importance of

"balanced" growth and asked the assembled northerners what pace of development they wanted and what services should be given priority.

He concluded by observing: "I sense we are into a different era in northern Alberta — a

different era in time, in not competing for new opportunities, but in managing the opportunities we have as well. I sense also that as Albertans your test will be: Is it good for the people who are living here now?"

NADC Working For You



Alberta
NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

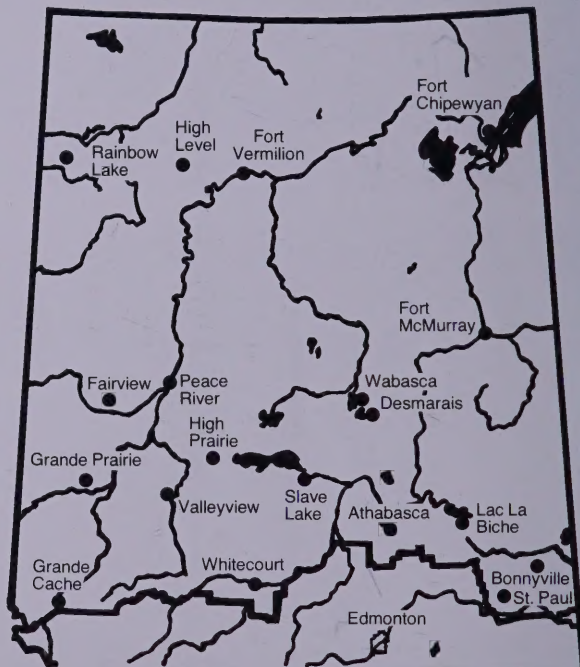
The Northern Alberta Development Council, made up of two elected members of the Legislative Assembly and eight northern citizens appointed on the basis of public nominations, is charged with the responsibility to "investigate, monitor, evaluate, plan and promote practical measures to foster and advance general development in northern Alberta and to advise the government thereon." The NADC Act makes specific reference to social and economic development, the development of communities and service delivery, and development of government services and programs.

The council is chaired by Elmer Borstad, MLA Grande Prairie, and reports to the Provincial Cabinet through J.A. "Boomer" Adair, Minister of Tourism and Small Business, responsible for Northern Development. The council's primary role is to provide government with a northern point of view on a wide range of issues, supplementing and complimenting the perspectives of northern MLAs. Since its reorganization in 1973, a major objective of the council has been to increase the amount of public participation in the planning and design of delivery systems for various government services in northern Alberta.



Through regularly scheduled public meetings and sponsorship of major conferences and seminars, the council serves as a forum to which residents can express their views regarding development of the North. Over the past six years, forty public meetings have been held in various communities. Major activities have included the Opportunity North Conference, Northern Transportation Seminar, Agriculture North Conference and Health Needs Workshop.

In addition to receiving briefs at public meetings, the council can initiate research into particular opportunities or needs. It often pursues, on behalf of northern residents, efforts toward the development of new programs or coordination of the existing service delivery.



Dynamic Growth To Come

Looking into the future is a necessity for our society, given the massive amounts of capital involved in proposed industrial projects. Although a complex set of factors will actually determine whether any given project proceeds, some of the major industrial projects currently being considered are:

- Esso Resources Canada Ltd. — Heavy oil insitu plant at Cold Lake, \$7 billion, 3,000

permanent jobs.

- Alsands Project Group — Oil sands mining plant north of Fort MacKay, \$7 billion, 2,500 permanent jobs.
- Un-named — Dam and hydro-electric power facility at Dunvegan on the Peace River.
- Weldwood of Canada Ltd. — Reopening and expansion of waferboard manufacturing

plant at Mitsue Lake near Slave Lake, 265 jobs.

- Chieftain Development Co. Ltd. — Gas processing plant in the Hythe-Brainard area.
- British Columbia Forest Products Limited — Sawmill planer complex at Grande Cache, sawmill planer complex at Knight, and paper mill plus thermo-mechanical pulping

facilities at Hurdy.

- Peace River Industrial Resources Ltd. — \$4 million silica sand plant north of Peace River.
- Esso Resources Canada Ltd. — Surface coal mine at Judy Creek.
- Foothills Pipe Lines (Alta) Ltd. — \$10 billion natural gas pipeline.

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Northern Alberta at a Glance

With only about 10% of Alberta's population and 60% of its land, the area within the Northern Alberta Development Council boundary is sparsely populated. However, the region possesses a wealth of natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable. These are a great asset in a world where population continues to grow, renewable resources are occasionally poorly managed, and non-renewable resources are being depleted.

At last count, there were 11,808 farms with a total of 3.5 million hectares in the area. The region's farm population of 36,000 live in various locales from St. Paul to High Prairie to Beaverlodge. In Fort Vermilion-LaCrete, where agricultural land is still being pioneered, we find the most northerly farming area in the world. Large amounts of barley, rapeseed, hay and wheat are produced, along with other specialty crops. Livestock has become increasingly important across the north.

In recent years a number of processing plants have been established for rapeseed, alfalfa, animal feed, meat products, fish, fluid milk and honey. Difficulties persist in the movement of grain, since some farmers are located at a distance from elevators — as in the Valleyview and Fort Vermilion regions.

Eight of the ten provincially-administered forests lie wholly or partly in the area. They contain approximately 5.4 million hectares of potentially productive forest. Extensive reserves of timber are managed on a sustained yield basis, with leases and quotas offered for sale from time to time. During the past decade, a number of small sawmills have closed, mainly due to technological change in the industry. Attention has turned to the building of a pulp and paper mill, sawmill/planer mill complexes, and mills that produce wood products such as veneer and waferboard.



Relatively small numbers of people are employed in commercial fishing and trapping. Recent statistics show 1,022 licenced commercial fisherman active on 60 lakes of the province's northern fishing zones. Their catch of just under 3.7 million pounds was mostly sold through the Freshwater Fish Marketing



Corporation. Registered trappers in the NADC area numbered over 2,000 in 1978/79. During the year, they harvested 30,629 beaver and pelts of 20 other species. The annual income of many trappers has risen appreciably because prices for pelts have recovered in recent years.

The tourism and recreation industry in northern Alberta is very much linked to the abundance of opportunities for sportfishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, camping and other outdoor experiences. According to the 1980 report of the Select Committee on Recreational and Commercial Fishing, an estimated 368,940 anglers, many of them in northern Alberta, caught an estimated 7 million pounds of fish. They spent over \$160 million in pursuit of recreational fishing. Some 990 or one-third of all accommodation industry establishments in Alberta are situated in the five northern TIAALTA zones.

Non-renewable resources in the area are mostly energy-related: oil and gas, oil sands and coal. Less important than these from an economic point of view are sand, gravel and peat moss. Deposits of iron ore, silica sand and granite also exist, and may be commercially exploited in the future.

In 1979, approximately one-quarter of Alberta's coal production came from the underground and surface properties of McIntyre Mines in Grande Cache. Abundant reserves are available in the north and production is envisaged in July Creek and a number of other areas.

Half of Alberta's remaining recoverable crude oil reserves, and an increasing proportion of its remaining reserves of marketable natural gas are found in the area. Reserves are distributed in nine major gas fields and 18 major oil fields, the largest of them being Swan Hills and Rainbow, the newest Elsworth. The north is crisscrossed by cutlines, wells, gas processing plants, and oil and gas pipelines. The enormous 56-inch diameter Alaska Highway Natural Gas Pipeline will one day transverse northwestern Alberta.



Two large oil sands mining and processing plants are currently in operation in the Fort McMurray area. Suncor began operations at its \$235 million plant in 1967, and is currently undergoing expansion. Syncrude Canada Ltd. commenced production at its \$2.2 billion plant in 1978. The magnitude of this project and other proposed megaprojects like it is illustrated by the fact that every other industrial project completed in northern Alberta in the seventies cost less than \$100 million.

The Energy Resources Conservation Board estimates that the four major oil sands deposits in northern Alberta contain 156 trillion cubic metres of crude bitumen. Total capital costs of the proposed Esso insitu plant at Cold Lake and the proposed Alsands mining project north of Fort McMurray will likely be in excess of \$7 billion each. There are currently no less than 24

pilot or experimental oil sands projects, some of which are capitalized at \$70 million each, and eleven heavy oil ventures. However, many factors are involved in determining if and when future oil sands or heavy oil plants will proceed.

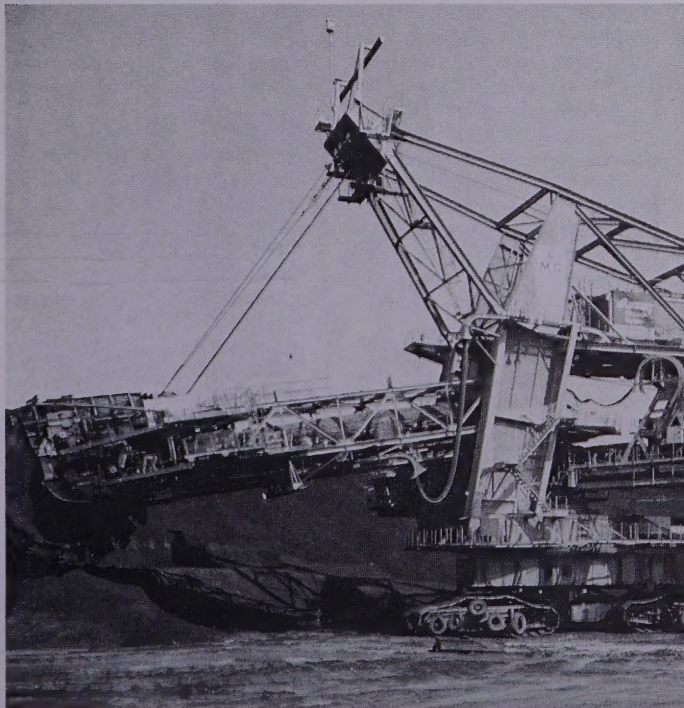
Unlike other regions, vigorous activity in northern Alberta's primary industries is not matched by strength in manufacturing. The exceptions are processing plants geared to agriculture, forestry and natural gas. Construction is well represented in the regional economy. It is oriented to the larger industrial projects, maintaining and upgrading the region's roads, railways, utilities and airports, or to service and trade activities.

Most of the major transportation routes to the Northwest Territories and Yukon cross northern Alberta, including the Great Slave Lake Railway, the MacKenzie and Alaska Highways. This places northern businesses in a favourable position to benefit from developments north of the Alberta border. Yet the great distances, climate and sparse population can lead to costly delays in moving people and goods. North-south routes are being developed, Highway 35 has been paved to the border, and Highway 67 is nearing completion. Other transportation projects will proceed. Among these is a development road to connect Lac La Biche with the communities of Imperial Mills, Conklin, Cheecham, Anzac, and Fort McMurray.

The percentage of people employed in service and trade activities in northern Alberta is less than in many regions of southern Canada. Entrepreneurs face the disadvantage of a small local market. Many locations in the north are not only physically distant, but access to them is sometimes poor. Even where transportation is reliable, it is expensive and usually limited.

Utility and construction costs are significantly higher than for the equivalent service or operation in southern Alberta. If labor is imported, it is somewhat more expensive due to higher wage requirements, transportation and living allowances. Special services are offered by government to assist small businesses in overcoming these and other obstacles.

The Provincial and Federal Governments both operate financial institutions as lenders of last resort, provide management assistance upon request, assist in preparing feasibility studies, and supply continually updated information on prices and market conditions.



Infrastructure and Servicing Requirements



Like everyone else, northern Albertans need basic infrastructure and services, such as roads, electricity, industrial land, education, health care and affordable housing. Many northerners also increasingly desire a broad range of other services frequently found in metropolitan centres. Along with conditions in the home and at the place of employment, accessibility to services is a major determinant of quality of life.

Services of interest to northerners are many and varied, and include those commonly desired elsewhere — public assistance; justice, corrections and policing; fire protection; telephones, radio, television and postal services, day care, and various preventive social service programs. Commonly recognized infrastructural services are: a potable water supply; modern sewage treatment; garbage removal; electricity and natural gas supply; airports; paved streets, sidewalks, parking facilities and snow-clearing arrangements; and storm sewers and earthworks for flood protection.

All of these services and infrastructure requirements will be much affected by growth in the north. Three basic services, however, are of crucial importance — education, health care and housing.

In 1978/79, there were 246 schools in the NADC area with 3,594 teachers and 60,093 students. Among the issues being faced by educators and parents in the north are truancy

and high drop-out rates. Efforts are being made to show teenagers the benefits of completing their high school education and/or committing their attention to some form of vocational or post-secondary education. Where lesser benefits are identified, as in many predominantly native communities, changes are required in curriculum, attitudes and community economic development initiatives. Elsewhere, the relative attractiveness of wages in construction-related trades has persuaded many to seek vocational as opposed to pre-university courses.

Vocational training in northern Alberta is available at a number of centres and regional colleges. Numerous upgrading and self-improvement courses are offered in satellite vocational centres and community vocational centres. Several funding and on-the-job training programs are offered by provincial and federal government agencies, and by certain private sector employers. Syncrude's native development program is noteworthy as company - provided on-the-job training. With the high cost of living in places where vocational and post-secondary education are offered, pressure is being placed on government to assist students in finding accommodation and in coping with financial and other sources of stress.

Each year the Northern Alberta Development Council sponsors a number of bursaries for northern students to attend post-secondary

institutions. The council is also supporting research designed to identify and analyze barriers facing native people in their efforts to receive training and hold employment. During the debate on the issue, NADC also publicly recorded its support of the proposed move of Athabasca University from Edmonton to the town of Athabasca.

Health care services in northern Alberta have recently been the subject of a major study commissioned by NADC in response to a series of briefs received from the public. The results of the study, which were discussed at a workshop of health care professionals in St. Paul in February, 1980, showed (i) co-ordination problems between agencies at both the policy level and the operational level, (ii) the desirability of well-financed, well-qualified travelling medical teams to maintain regular contact with patients and on-site primary care workers, (iii) basic health care needs of rural and isolated communities are not being met, and (iv) mental health services and treatment facilities and programs for alcohol problems are the major issues for many communities. After incorporating suggestions from the health care professionals and other northern residents, NADC has forwarded a comprehensive series of recommendations to the Provincial Cabinet.

An influx of people into northern Alberta, natural population increase, and trends toward increased geographic mobility and

smaller household sizes, have combined with heightened expectations to cause a housing shortage. As a result of high mortgage rates, the high cost of serviced land, and increased heating and servicing costs, accommodation is becoming more expensive.

Efforts are being made by government agencies to provide subsidies for disadvantaged, elderly and handicapped northerners, to assist in rental housing programs, and to participate in various municipal assistance programs. Of particular consequence to low-income rural northerners are the rural and remote housing programs, some of which require involvement of the future homeowner in the construction.

While many northerners would prefer to take care of their own housing needs, there is widespread recognition that in many cases conditions merit timely and appropriate government action. In boom towns of the north, municipal and provincial governments have generally had difficulty in ensuring that affordable, standard quality housing is quickly and readily available.

There have also been some problems in responding to the needs of special population groups, such as elderly and native households. On the positive side, valuable lessons are being learned, and public awareness of town planning and community building needs is on the increase.

Coping With Change



At a time when an unprecedented number of new industrial projects are being proposed for northern Alberta, it is entirely appropriate for northern Albertans to be asking themselves how to minimize the social impact of economic growth — and how to ensure

that northerners share fully in the economic benefits of development. New industrial projects, many of them in primary or land-based industries, lead to impacts on both nearby communities and the natural environment. The projects also affect and are

affected by complex provincial, national and international situations.

Industrial projects play a major role in the economy of northern Alberta, employing a great number of people. As new people arrive in the north, an increasing range of goods and services will be required from the private and public sectors.

Major industrial projects create "shocks" to the local economy. It may become difficult to find accommodation, facilities for delivering educational programs. Health care and other services may be strained, retail prices may rise faster than elsewhere, and so on. Often there are too many people chasing too few houses, schools, hospitals, store goods and repair services. Transients may be attracted, crime may increase, wages may rise sharply in trades related to the new industrial project.

Proper preparation and planning should allow for the new demands to be met by increased business activity and provision of services and infrastructure. But, realistically, business and governments take time to respond. Both face

the uncertainties of gauging the growth and determining the investment required in the community to meet the new demand.

Economic and political circumstances elsewhere in the province and across Canada also have their effects on northern Alberta. Inflation and the high cost of borrowing capital are country-wide problems. Although Alberta has a lower rate of unemployment than other provinces, there are areas of high unemployment in northern Alberta. This is especially true in remote communities with substantial native populations.

In a number of other areas in northern Alberta there is some difficulty in attracting highly qualified manpower. This is further complicated by the fact that economic decisions regarding northern development often take place outside the region — in boardrooms and government offices. This reinforces the need for strong information exchange mechanisms to ensure public participation by northerners.

The Meaning of Balanced Growth

In its position paper on "Economic Development of Northern Alberta", released in December, 1977, the Northern Alberta Development Council defined balanced growth in the following way:

- (i) **Economic Geographical Balance.** There will always be parts of the north that are more prosperous than others; that is inevitable given the uneven distribution of resources. But extremes of poverty should not go untreated in a land where the funds for treatment unquestionably exist.
- (ii) **Economic Growth Balanced in Time.** The history of northern economic growth has been a recurrent series of booms and slumps. Boom periods initially appear to have exciting

and adventurous appeal, but a closer examination reveals a network of costly problems: inflation, tremendous influxes of transients, crime, alcoholism, and other forms of social distress. While northerners want economic growth, they do not want the essentials of their life destroyed. When it is necessary for massive projects to proceed in order to serve a larger public interest, proper preparation and planning are necessary.

- (iii) **Balance Between Private and Public Sectors.** The Premier, in his 1975 Opportunity North Conference speech, asked northerners about the role of the Provincial Government in the North, and pointed out

that once government got involved, it was difficult for it to withdraw. Northerners do not want to be dominated by government in the process of economic growth. But few communities are large enough to deal with resource development companies, or with some of the complex social and economic problems characteristic of our times. In such circumstances, government has a role in becoming involved to restore the balance.

- (iv) **Environmental Balance.** The environmental sensitivity of northern land and water varies widely in different areas. In some parts, soil conditions, altitude and slow growth of plant life result in high

susceptibility to permanent damage. In those areas greater care must be taken and regulations must be strict. Elsewhere sensitivity is not great, and many activities should proceed with minimal government involvement.

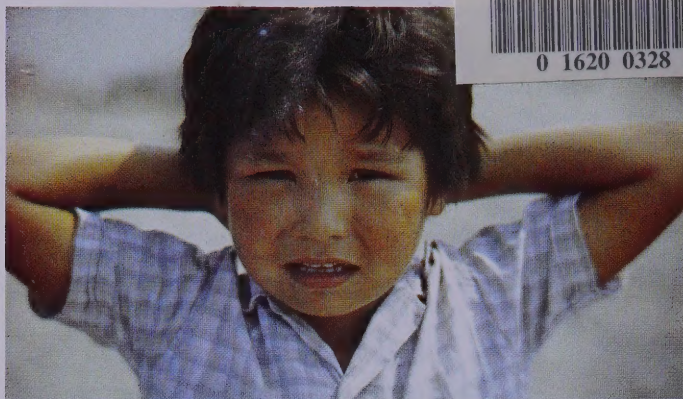
- (v) **Social Balance.** In the past, northern economic development has tended to serve some groups of people much better than others, and unfortunately the division between the included and the excluded has tended to follow ethnic lines. Northern development must be for all northerners who want to participate and, for those who find that difficult, an extra effort must be made.

Implications For People

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The Northern Alberta Development Council appreciates that rapid economic development or boom growth has great implications for every northerner. Clearly, these implications differ from community to community and from individual to individual.

Some, and they fortunate, are

able to perceive accurately their community and individual interests and pursue lines of action that meet their needs. When this is done skillfully and thoughtfully, people outside the communities and the region are not often affected adversely.

Others, out of preference or because of difficulty coping,

turn to the support of government agencies, industry and private organizations to identify their needs and interests. If individual northerners do not voice their concerns on issues such as minimizing the social impact of economic growth, or ensuring that northerners share fully in the economic benefits of

development, the "support agencies" cannot act in an informed manner.

"Alberta North in the '80s" will succeed as a conference for northerners if community groups and individuals express their aspirations and exhibit a conviction that, yes, we can affect the shape of changes to come.

Keeping Up With Progress

1. GET INVOLVED

The rapid economic growth in the north has and will attract many newcomers. The challenge for many long-term residents will be to accept the disruptions and rise to new opportunities. People, young and old, must get involved and build strong, vital communities. To those who have recently arrived, **you too can become part of the north.** Become active as a volunteer or

community leader. The participation of every northerner is needed if our communities are to continue to offer the amenities which enhance our quality of life.

2. CONTACT YOUR COUNCIL

The Northern Alberta Development Council holds regular meetings throughout the north. Plan to attend the meeting or contact Council

members in person. Please do not hesitate to call or write with your questions or concerns:

Elmer E. Borstad, MLA Chairman Grande Prairie	539-2276
Henry Sinclair Vice-Chairman Box 82 Slave Lake	849-3837
Barrie Fraser Box 1458 St. Paul	645-4535
James A. May 9011 - 101 Street Grande Prairie	532-8194

Jim Kincaid Box 350 LaCrete	928-2441
Norm Weiss, MLA Ft. McMurray	791-1865
Barry Lazoruk Box 456 Rycroft	765-3773
Walter Holowack Box 209 Grande Cache	827-3216
Barbara Wilkinson Box 540 Athabasca	675-4325
Romeo Lauzon Box 1208 Bonnyville	826-5728

3. LET'S HEAR FROM YOU

I cannot attend the "Alberta North in the '80s" Conference but I would like to give you the following reaction raised on these pages.

Comments: _____

Supplement to the Fort McMurray Today, Grande Prairie Her People, October 10th. Athabasca Echo, Beaverlodge & Distr Lake Courier, Fairview Post, Falher Smoky River Express, Gr Mountaineer, Grande Prairie Booster, High Level Echo, High News, Manning Banner Post, Peace River Record Gazette, St. Lake Lake Leader, Valleyview Valley Views, Whitecourt St Barrhead Leader, Bonnyville Nouvelle, Grimshaw North Peace Biche Post, Slave Lake Scope, Swan Hills Grizzly Gazette, West October 7.

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Alberta north in the '80s : conference to help plan for the future.

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